

Funding Dispute Over Aboriginal Women's Resources

Aboriginal women have been strongly lobbying the Federal Government over the last four years to establish an Aboriginal Women's Legal Resource Centre to provide access to the legal system to victims of violence.

Following the "Access to Justice" statements, we feel it is essential to express our concerns. We are extremely pleased the funding is finally available. However, we are concerned that Aboriginal women have been overlooked in the process. We therefore wish to make our statement known by issuing the following press release.

Aboriginal Women Take Prime Minister to Task on "Access to Justice"

The New South Wales Aboriginal Women's Legal Resources Incorporation (AWLR) strongly criticised the Federal Government's "Access to Justice" statement, branding it a complete farce.

The criticism follows the Prime Minister's announcement that funding for indigenous women's services would be given to a non-Aboriginal women's organisation — the Women's Legal Resources Centre (WLRC).

Patricia Frail, the AWLR President, says that the announcement was a shock and presents a situation that is clearly unworkable. "The position of Aboriginal people has been neglected once again. Aboriginal women have worked hard to make the Government acknowledge our specific legal issues. Now they have undermined their own rhetoric of Aboriginal self determination and self management by passing control to an organisation with no Aboriginal representation," said Ms Frail.

The AWLR had called on the Prime Minister and Attorney-General to reconsider the decision and acknowledge research and consultations which consistently indicate that Aboriginal women and children do not have adequate access to established legal services.

Acceptance of funding by the WLRC would be seen as a clear betrayal. "If WLRC renege on their position our relationship will be clearly unworkable. A clear indication was given at a WLRC management meeting that they would not support such a move and assured us that funding would not be accepted," Ms Frail said.

New South Wales Aboriginal Women's Legal Resource Centre